

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 00714 181417Z
ACTION AID-05

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 AGRE-00 EB-08 IGA-02 PC-01
PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 IO-13
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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5992

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID, EAGR, NI
SUBJECT: FOOD CORPS PROPOSAL

REF: 77 STATE 301059

1. AT THIS TIME EMBASSY BELIEVES FMG WOULD NOT BE RECEPTIVE TO FOOD CORPS PROPOSAL. A BASIC OBSTACLE IS THAT FIGERIA DOES NOT LOOK FAVORABLY ON "NONPROFESSIONAL" GROUPS WORKING IN AGRICULTURE, A SECTOR THAT IS SHOWING NEGATIVE GROWTH AND IS BESET WITH PROBLEMS. AS RECENTLY AS THIS WEEK, PERMSEC AND OTHER HIGH-RANKING MINISTRY OF AGRULTURE OFFICIALS TOLD US THAT THEY COULD NO LONGER AFFORD TO SETTLE FOR MEASURES SHORT OF BRINGING IN TOP U.S. EXPERTISE IN LARGE SCALE AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS, PREFERABLY IN FORM OF INVESTMENT IN GIANT FARMS. FOOD CORPS SUGGESTION DOES NOT OFFER THE GUARANTEE OF EXPERTISE THAT FMG IS DEMANDING.

2. SECOND PROBLEM IS FOOD CORPS'S SIMILAR APPEARANCE TO PEACE CORPS. FMG REGARDS LATTER AS ORGANIZATION WHOSE MEMBERS LACK SUFFICIENTLY PROFESSIONAL SKILLS. MOREOVER, PEACE CORPS STILL VIEWED IN SOME NIGERIAN CIRCLES AS POTENTIAL CORRUPTER OF NIGERIAN YOUTH AND/OR POSSIBLE FRONT FOR U.S. COVERT INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS. GOVERNMENT WOULD BE OPPOSED TO PEACE CORPS PERSONNEL MOVING FREELY ABOUT COUNTRY, AND WOULD BE LIKELY TO LEVY SOME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LAGOS 00714 181417Z

RESTRICTIONS ON FOOD CORPS REPRESENTATIVES. AS EXAMPLE OF DIS-TRUST, FMG RECENTLY REJECTED WELL-PREPARED FISHERIES ASSISTANCE PROJECT PROPOSED BY PEACE CORPS.

3. IN REGARD TO EXISTING VOLUNTEER AND DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURES, NIGERIA HAS HAD A NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS SINCE 1973. SOME 2,000 NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY GRADUATES MOVE INTO THIS PROGRAM EVERY

YEAR. USAID MISSION AS WELL AS PEACE CORPS HAS BEEN PHASED OUT.

4. MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE CONTINUES TO GROPE FOR VIABLE PROGRAM TO PULL AGRICULTURE OUT OF DOLDRUMS BY RAISING BOTH PRODUCTIVITY AND PRODUCTION, BUT WE BELIEVE FOOD CORPS CONCEPT IS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE. GIVEN FMG'S RECENT REALIZATION THAT ITS CAPITAL PROJECT COMMITMENTS CURRENTLY EXCEED AVAILABLE FUNDS, HOWEVER, MORE LIBERAL CHANGES IN POLICY ARE POSSIBLE. WE WILL CONTINUE TO STAY ALERT TO ANY INDICATIONS OF THIS AND REPORT ACCORDINGLY.
EASUM

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